



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia



Information for parents, carers and family

Child Safe Organisations WA

Children and young people have the right to be safe, feel safe and be treated with respect wherever they are - at home, school, clubs, churches, sport - everywhere.

This information sheet describes three main things you can do to help keep children safe wherever they are.

**Did you
know**



Children and young people are more likely to be harmed by someone they know, and even trust, than by a stranger.

1 Help children to understand and speak up

Teach children about **personal safety and their rights**, this is just as important as discussing fire, pool or road safety.

Talk regularly with children about different feelings and practice **'what if...'** scenarios, this will help them to feel more comfortable and confident to speak to you or another reliable person about anything that worries them.

Start **age appropriate sex education** as young as possible. A great resource is the book **Talk soon. Talk often** (webpage http://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/S_T/Talk-soon-Talk-often)

Discuss **body signals and emotions** that help tell them when they feel unsafe - like butterflies in their stomach, wobbly legs or sweaty hands.

Children need to understand the difference between touch that is part of their care and **touch that is not okay**.

Let them know it is not okay for others to touch their **private parts** or for them to touch others.

Reinforce they have **a right to say no to anyone** - other children and young people, adults, even someone they know or trust.

Use the **correct terminology** for private body parts so if a child speaks up about abuse it is clear what they are saying and how they are being harmed.

Make sure they know how to use the internet, social media and phones safely.

Help your child develop a **safety network** of at least five different people they can talk to about anything that worries them; include family members and people in the places they go. Make sure the people chosen are aware and would be willing to help if needed. Review the list often.

Reassure them that nothing is so awful that they can't tell someone about it and **not to keep secrets**.

Encourage your child to **be persistent** and to talk to another adult if the first person they tell doesn't seem to do anything.

2 Choose organisations carefully and stay involved

Make sure the organisation can cater for all the **specific needs of your child** - physical, cultural, communication and developmental.

Look around at the physical environment and information available for children and young people, and check the organisation's website, policies and social media. Drop in to visit the organisation at different times and days.

Engage with the organisation so you **really get to know staff and volunteers** and also get a sense of their **values** and **respect** for children and young people. Ask any questions you feel are important. How the staff respond to your questions will give you a sense of how they value you and your child.

Talk to your child to find out if they feel safe there or if they have any worries or concerns.

Talk to parents and others who have contact with the organisation.

Ask how the organisation talks with the children about their rights and personal safety.

Give feedback and let the organisation know what they are doing well, what they might improve and how you would like to be involved to continually support their work with children and young people.





Did you know?

Children and young people have said that they feel safe and welcome when:

- people care about them
- people include them and listen to them
- the rules and their rights are explained to them
- they have choices
- they have fun and are happy
- they can talk to someone about any problems.

If you are **concerned about an organisation** your child attends or want to make a complaint, ask someone at the organisation you feel comfortable with or visit their website to find out about their complaints system.

If you are **not happy with the organisation's response**, find the next step and contact that agency. The Ombudsman of Western Australia can investigate complaints about State government agencies, statutory authorities, local governments and public universities.

Use the checklist provided on the back if you would like to know more about what you can expect an organisation to do to make their service as safe as possible. The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA has developed resources to help organisations review and improve their approaches to child safety.

Visit www.ccp.wa.gov.au or search for 'Child Safe Organisations WA'.

3 Act appropriately on concerns

If a child tells you they are being harmed or feel unsafe:

Be **calm** and **supportive**.

Listen to what they say, be patient and let them use their own words. Listening supportively is more important than what you say.

Reassure them it is right they told you and it's not their fault.

Ask just enough **questions** to plan how to keep them safe and what to do next and avoid quizzing for details.

Respect that the child may only want to reveal some details. Acknowledge their bravery in speaking up.

Don't make promises you can't keep and let them know to **keep them safe** you will need to tell someone else.

SEEK HELP

- The Department of Community Services has detailed information about what to do if you are concerned about abuse or neglect of any child.
- If you continue to be worried and think nothing is happening for the child after contacting any agency, trust your judgement and keep trying until your concerns are taken seriously.
- Kids Helpline provides tips on dealing with issues and concerns for children, young people and parents as well as counselling services. Visit www.kidshelpline.com.au or phone 1800 55 1800.



Nine domains of child safety

CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS

The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA has developed nine domains to help organisations review and improve their approaches to child safety. Consider asking the organisation your child is attending what they have in place in these areas:

DOMAIN	STRATEGIES
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are clear messages about child safety displayed at the organisation and on their website Leaders and staff show a commitment to child safety by their actions and behaviour Leaders can give examples of how they manage risks to safety
Empowering children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people have a say in how the organisation runs and make suggestions for improvement Staff empower children and talk about their rights The organisation caters for the diverse needs of children
Involving family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organisation involves parents, carers, the wider family and community It is clear how to raise a concern and you would feel comfortable to do so The organisation gets advice and support from others to meet the needs of children and young people with disability, complex needs or from culturally diverse backgrounds
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers There are rules for behaviour of all children There are guidelines about physical contact between adults and children and between children
Staff and volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is clear how the organisation recruits and conducts checks on staff and volunteers There is ongoing supervision and support for staff and volunteers Staff feel comfortable to raise any concerns about the behaviour of other staff members or volunteers or other areas for improvement
Safe environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The physical environment is safe and checked regularly Children can be seen at all times and in all places There are clear rules about communicating with children online or via phones and devices
Complaint processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The complaints system is clear, child friendly and children are comfortable to use it Children and young people are asked to feedback on their experiences Staff can give examples of when a child or young person made a complaint and how it was handled
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and volunteers are educated about spotting the signs of child abuse They know what to do if a child talks about abuse Information is given to children about their rights, protective behaviours and online safety Information about child safety is offered to parents and family members
Continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organisation regularly reviews the way it does things and shares this information with parents The organisation is audited regularly internally or externally Children, young people and families are involved in reviews and audits